Theodicy: The Neutral Solution Summary

THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

WHY WOULD GOD DO THIS?

EXCESSIVE SUFFERING

THE WEIGHTINESS OF THE FOSSIL RECORD

THE HELPFUL SOLUTION.

By Richard Beobide

Citation Note on the Use of Grok

(xAI Large Language Model)In the preparation of this work, the author consulted Grok, a large language model developed by xAI, as a scholarly research assistant. Grok was employed exclusively for the following purposes:

- to conduct line-by-line, neutral, truth-seeking analyses of the manuscript drafts;
- to verify biblical exegesis, paleontological data, and philosophical arguments against primary sources;
- to identify areas requiring clarification, consistency, or refinement;
- to supply precise scholarly citations, formatting suggestions, and structural feedback; and
- to prepare preliminary drafts of certain sections (such as the Preface) for the author's review and revision.

All queries to Grok were made in real time between May and June 2026. The author retained full editorial control at every stage. Every argument, every exegetical decision, every theological claim, and every final wording in The Neutral Solution Theodicy is the author's own. Grok functioned solely as a rigorous conversational partner and research tool, not as a co-author or source of original ideas.

In addition to the general assistance described above, the author also entrusted Grok with drafting two specific sections of the work. These sections are noted below.

It should also be noted that the section titled "Divine Commands and Progressive Ordering in Genesis 1: A Non-Ad Hoc Framework for Scriptural Silence on Pre-Fall Carnivory within the Neutral Solution Theodicy" was written by Grok. All of the necessary ideas, theological content, and conceptual framework for this portion were originally developed and supplied by the author, Richard Beobide. After determining that he was unable to produce a suitably non-ad hoc scholarly formulation of these concepts on his own, and believing the material to be of importance for the body of Christ, the author entrusted the drafting of this specific article to Grok. The author subsequently reviewed, revised, and approved the final version of the section.

It should further be noted that the section titled "Suffering & Horrendous Evil: Response to Marilyn McCord Adams" was written by Grok. All of the necessary ideas, theological content, and conceptual framework for this portion were originally developed and supplied by the author, Richard Beobide. After determining that he was unable to produce a suitably finished version on his own, the author entrusted the drafting of this specific article to Grok. The author subsequently reviewed, revised, and approved the final version of the section.

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Preface

The Problem of Evil has haunted thoughtful minds for centuries. When the fossil record is added to the equation, the tension becomes acute: for hundreds of millions of years before humans existed, the earth's strata preserve unmistakable evidence of predation, pain, and death (creatures locked in combat, prey in terror, conscious suffering ending in death). Yet Scripture declares the entire creation "very good" (Genesis 1:31) and states that death entered the world through human sin (Romans 5:12). How can a good and sovereign Creator be responsible for a world in which suffering and death were already woven into the fabric of life long before Adam?

This short work offers one possible answer: the Neutral Solution Theodicy. It proposes that the pre-Fall creation existed in a genuinely good yet amoral-but-good state. In that state, predation, suffering, and death were real but morally neutral realities that served a deliberate divine purpose. God intentionally allowed this deep-time amoral-but-good state so that Adam could receive a direct, observable "witness of backward reversion" (true amoral animal interaction) as a living lesson that revealed exactly what the consequences of disobedience would bring his family and dominion into. Through the fossil record, that same lesson has been preserved for every subsequent generation.

What appears at first to be an insurmountable conflict between Scripture and science is thereby transformed into positive divine pedagogy (teaching practice). The Neutral Solution does not deny the reality of animal suffering, nor does it soften the gravity of human sin. Instead, it insists on examining both the biblical text and the empirical record together as a single, unified body of evidence. It treats scientific data as neutral, neither automatically hostile to faith nor automatically supportive of it, and asks the reader to follow the evidence wherever it leads.

The pages that follow present this proposal in full. They integrate the plain reading of Genesis chapters 1–3 (including Adam's command to guard the garden), the stratigraphic testimony of the fossil record, the privacy of conscious suffering, and the redemptive work of Christ.

No attempt is made to force young-earth or old-earth chronology; the focus remains on honest reconciliation. This theodicy is offered not as a final answer but as an invitation. It asks every reader, believer and skeptic alike, to set aside rhetorical traps and examine the data afresh. If the proposal succeeds, it will have shown that the fossil record need not threaten faith; it can instead stand as a quiet, enduring testimony of a Creator who prepared humanity for an informed moral choice and who, in the person of Jesus Christ, entered the very "becomes the prey" reality to absorb its full cost and restore the original grant of life. May the reader engage these pages with the same neutral, truth-seeking spirit in which they were written.

Richard Beobide
June 2026

The Thesis

The Neutral Solution Theodicy proposes that the pre-Fall creation existed in a genuinely amoral state that God declared good. In this state, predation, suffering, and death were real, yet animals, being non-moral creatures, bore no moral responsibility. These realities existed for hundreds of millions of years before Adam.

God placed Adam in the garden with two clear commands: to guard the garden, and do not eat of the tree (Genesis 2:15-17), and, on the sixth day, God established a harmonious herbal diet for both man and beast (Genesis 1:29–30).

The specific problem this theodicy addresses is the apparent conflict between the biblical declaration of a "very good" creation and the fossil record's clear testimony of widespread animal predation, pain, and death long before human sin. Rather than viewing this pre-Fall suffering as evidence against God's goodness, the Neutral Solution holds that God intentionally allowed an amoral-but-good state so that Adam could receive a direct, observable "witness of backward reversion." This living lesson, coupled with Adam's duty to guard the garden, supplied him with a fully informed understanding of the consequences of disobedience. Through the fossil record, that same witness now serves every subsequent generation. In this way, Adam's choice was not naïve, and the empirical record is transformed from a theological problem into positive divine pedagogy (teachin lesson) that continues to serve throughout all humanity.

Dedicated Problem Statement

The fossil record presents a formidable challenge to any account of a "very good" creation. For hundreds of millions of years before the appearance of humanity, the earth's strata preserve vivid evidence of widespread predation: sea, air, and land creatures locked in the very act of striking prey, prey fleeing in terror, and the conscious agony of shock, systemic collapse, and death. This record of suffering and extinction stretches across deep time, long before Adam's creation or any human sin. Yet Scripture declares that God pronounced the entire creation "very good" (Genesis 1:31) and that death and suffering entered the world through human disobedience (Romans 5:12).

God had placed Adam in the garden with the explicit command to guard it, and not eat of the forbidden tree (Genesis 2:15-17) and, on the sixth day, had issued a dietary command establishing harmonious provision for man and beast (Genesis 1:29–30). How can a good and sovereign Creator be responsible for a world in which predation, pain, and death were already woven into the fabric of life for eons before humanity ever existed? This tension between the biblical testimony and the empirical record is the precise problem the Neutral Solution Theodicy seeks to address.

The Bridge Statement

Precisely because suffering and happiness are radically individual, non-transferable realities, internalized solely within the conscious mind of each creature and impossible for any outsider to judge as excessive, the fossil record cannot function as an external, collective scorecard of evil. Therefore, what was experienced in the private consciousness of predator and prey has been preserved publicly as an enduring witness, yet it has remained largely underdetermined. However, this visible testimony brings to the attention of today's audience a necessary witness of what Adam observed in real time and received directly from the living creation before the Fall. Today, we as observers and subsequent generations can inspect this evidence, whether believer or non-believer, in the hope of understanding what Adam actually experienced.

Learning from Earlier Commands: An Antecedent Literary Pattern in Genesis 1

As a Guide for Reading ScriptureOne of the most helpful ways to grow in understanding the Bible is to pay close attention to how the text itself teaches us to read it. Sometimes Scripture gives us patterns early on that quietly shape how we should approach what comes later. In Genesis 1, there is a consistent way God's commands operate across the first five days of creation. Observing this pattern can serve as a helpful guide when we come to the commands given on the sixth day—particularly the dietary provision in Genesis 1:29–30. This observation is offered here in a spirit of humility, as one way of reading the text that may assist fellow believers in thinking carefully about what the Scripture says and does not say.

What Do We Mean by "Antecedent Literary Pattern" and "Narrative Precedent"?

An antecedent literary pattern simply means a consistent way of writing or speaking that appears earlier in a text and provides context for what follows. The earlier material comes before (antecedent) and therefore helps shape how later material should be understood.

When that earlier pattern is then used to guide our reading of later verses, it functions as a narrative precedent—an example drawn from within the story itself that shows us how to interpret similar situations.This is not a new or complicated idea. Scripture often works this way. For example, the way God deals with His people in the Exodus story becomes a pattern that later prophets and the New Testament writers draw upon. The pattern does not create new doctrine on its own; it simply helps us read the text more faithfully by letting earlier parts of the narrative inform later parts.

Observing the Pattern in Genesis 1: Days 1–5

When we read the creation account carefully, we notice a repeated movement in God's commands:

- God speaks a command that addresses an existing condition.
- The command brings about a new, ordered state.
- The text focuses on what God has now established, rather than giving an exhaustive description of everything that came before or everything that might still be possible.

Consider these examples:

- Day 1: "Let there be light" (Genesis 1:3). The text had previously described darkness and the deep. God's command does not erase the prior reality of darkness; it introduces light and separates the two. The focus is on the new ordered state.
- Day 2: God commands a firmament to divide the waters. The waters already existed; the command organizes them.
- Day 3: Dry land appears from the waters at God's word, followed by the command for vegetation. The land and plants are brought into ordered existence.
- Day 4: The luminaries are placed in the firmament.

- Day 5: Sea creatures and birds are brought forth and commanded to multiply.

In each case, the divine command moves creation from one functional state to another. The narrative does not pause to list every detail of what existed or occurred before the command, nor does it explicitly declare that every previous feature has been completely eliminated. The emphasis rests on the ordered reality God has spoken into being.This consistent approach is observable directly from the text. It does not require outside information to see.How This Pattern Serves as a Precedent for Day 6On the sixth day, God creates land animals and humanity, then gives this provision: “Behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed… and to every beast of the earth… I have given every green herb for meat: and it was so” (Genesis 1:29–30).

Notice what the text actually does here. It makes a positive statement: God gives plant-based food to humans and to the land and air creatures. It does not say, “You shall eat only plants and nothing else,” nor does it declare, “Carnivory shall now cease throughout creation.” When we read this through the pattern established in days 1–5, the silence becomes more understandable. Just as earlier commands brought new order without exhaustively describing or negating every aspect of the prior state, the day-6 dietary provision establishes a harmonious, God-given food source without needing to catalog or prohibit every possible dietary reality that may have existed before the command.

Scholars have long noted that Genesis 1:29–30 is a positive grant rather than a strict prohibition. C. John Collins, for example, observes that even if one reads it as prescribing plants for food, the statement applies specifically to land and flying creatures and leaves sea life unaddressed. It does not claim to describe the only possible food source. The pattern we have observed in the earlier days gives additional internal support for reading the verse in this measured way.

Practical Help for Interpretation

Recognizing this antecedent pattern can assist believers in several ways:

1. Handling silence in Scripture: When the text is silent about something, we are less likely to assume the silence must mean “that thing did not exist.” The pattern shows us that God’s commands often focus on what He is establishing rather than on everything He is leaving unmentioned.
2. Distinguishing between positive grants and universal prohibitions: A command that positively gives something good does not automatically rule out every other possibility unless the text explicitly says so.
3. Reading with the grain of the text: Instead of importing external assumptions (either that everything must have been perfectly peaceful in every way, or that nothing changed), we can let the consistent literary method of Genesis 1 guide us.

This approach does not claim to solve every question. It simply offers a textually grounded way of thinking about what the narrative does and does not tell us.

A Word of Humility: This Is Not Doctrine

It is important to state clearly what this observation is—and what it is not.
This way of reading Genesis 1 is offered as a helpful literary observation, not as a new doctrine that must be accepted by the church. The humility of Scripture itself warns us against turning every insightful pattern into an official teaching or institutional position. God's Word is sufficient, and the central truths of the faith are clearly taught. Patterns like the one discussed here can enrich our understanding and help us think more carefully, but they remain secondary tools for interpretation.

Different sincere believers may weigh this observation differently. Some may find it illuminating; others may prefer to emphasize other features of the text. That is as it should be. The goal is not to create new lines of division, but to encourage careful, prayerful reading of the Bible together as the body of Christ.

Conclusion

Genesis 1 shows us God bringing order through His word, moving creation from one state to another. The consistent way He does this in the first five days provides an antecedent pattern that can serve as a narrative precedent when we read the sixth day. This helps us approach the dietary provision—and the silence surrounding it—with greater clarity and care.

May this simple observation encourage you to keep reading Genesis 1 slowly and attentively, letting the text itself shape how you understand it. Above all, may it draw us closer to the One who spoke creation into being and who continues to speak to us through His Word.

Note: Has this idea been presented by other scholars in the past regarding the dietary command as an antecedent literary pattern from days 1–5" functioning as a narrative precedent.

Theodicy:

According to scholars in the theological field, Scripture provides specific information that inspires many branching possibilities and inferences. These cannot be conclusively proven or disproven from the text alone, yet they remain valuable and can be explored through other disciplines such as archaeology. Such unconfirmed concepts are regarded as “underdetermined.” All theories and theodicies rely on these underdetermined inferences, none of which can be absolutely proved. It is in this light that we move forward in this writing.

Divine Commands and Progressive Ordering in Genesis 1: A Non-Ad Hoc Framework for Scriptural Silence on Pre-Fall Carnivory within the Neutral Solution Theodicy

The Neutral Solution Theodicy holds that the pre-Fall creation existed in a genuinely amoral state that God declared “good.” In this state, predation, suffering, and death were real phenomena, yet animals—being non-moral creatures—bore no moral responsibility. These realities extended across deep time for hundreds of millions of years before Adam. God placed Adam in the garden with two explicit commands: to guard it and to refrain from eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Genesis 2:15–17). On the sixth day, God further issued a dietary provision establishing harmonious herbal food for both humanity and the animals (Genesis 1:29–30). The theodicy resolves the tension between the fossil record’s testimony of widespread predation, pain, and death long before human sin and Scripture’s affirmation that God pronounced the creation “very good” (Genesis 1:31) by viewing the pre-Fall world as an amoral-but-good arena in which Adam received a direct, observable “witness of backward reversion.” This living lesson, paired with his duty to guard the garden, supplied Adam with full information concerning the consequences of disobedience. The same empirical record continues to instruct subsequent generations.

This paper demonstrates that the pattern of God’s commands across the creation days supplies a textually grounded, non-ad hoc basis for understanding the scriptural silence—particularly on day 6 and the dietary provision—regarding any prior state of carnivory. The commands of days 1–5 consistently move creation from one ordered state to the next through divine speech. This same pattern renders the silence on day 6 intelligible and permits reasonable, honest inferences that align the biblical text with the fossil record while illuminating God’s pedagogical purpose for Adam’s decision at the tree.

The Pattern of Divine Commands: From One State to the Next (Days 1–5)

Genesis 1 presents creation as a sequence of divine commands that progressively transform existing conditions into new, ordered realities. On day 1, God commands light into the darkness: “Let there be light” (Genesis 1:3). The prior state of darkness is not erased by negation but superseded by the commanded light, after which God separates light from darkness. On day 2, the firmament is commanded to divide the waters above from the waters below. On day 3, dry land emerges from the waters at God’s command, followed by the command for vegetation to appear on the land. Day 4 brings the luminaries into the firmament. Day 5 sees sea creatures and birds brought forth from the waters and commanded to multiply. In each instance, the narrative records God speaking a command that effects a transition: an existing reality is addressed and ordered into a new, functional state declared “good.”

Crucially, these commands do not provide exhaustive descriptions of every aspect of the prior state, nor do they explicitly "stop" or negate every feature of what preceded them. The focus remains on the commanded transition and its resulting order. The text remains silent on numerous details of the pre-command conditions—such as the precise character of the initial darkness or the behavior of waters before separation—because the narrative prioritizes the sovereign ordering accomplished by the word of God. This textual pattern is observable, consistent, and exegetically secure; it requires no external importation of later theological constructs.

Day 6 Commands and the Dietary Provision: A Further Transition

Day 6 continues the pattern. God commands the earth to bring forth living creatures (Genesis 1:24), creates humanity in His image with dominion (Genesis 1:26–28), and then issues the dietary provision: "Behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed… to you it shall be for meat. And to every beast of the earth, and to every fowl of the air, and to every thing that creepeth upon the earth… I have given every green herb for meat: and it was so" (Genesis 1:29–30).

This provision functions as a command that grants and orders food sources for the newly created or existing creatures. It does not employ prohibitive language such as "you shall not eat flesh" or "carnivory shall cease." Instead, it positively supplies plant-based food and declares the arrangement "so." Following the established pattern of days 1–5, the dietary command effects a transition toward a harmonious, provisioned state within the broader creation. The narrative again remains silent on the precise dietary realities immediately prior to this command. It does not record whether carnivory had occurred, whether it continued alongside the granted herbal provision, or whether the command functioned to regulate rather than eradicate prior behaviors.

The silence is therefore not an anomaly but a continuation of the narrative method observed in the preceding days. Just as earlier commands ordered light, separation, land, and life without detailing or negating every feature of the antecedent state, the day-6 dietary command orders food provision without exhaustively addressing or prohibiting every possible prior or concurrent dietary reality. The text's focus remains on the commanded harmonious order that God then pronounces "very good" (Genesis 1:31).

Scriptural Silence on Carnivory and the Possibility of Reasonable Inference

Because the dietary command grants herbal food without explicitly stopping or prohibiting carnivory, the text leaves open the question of whether carnivory existed or persisted in the amoral creation. This silence is intelligible precisely because of the command-pattern established in days 1–5: divine speech brings ordered transitions; it does not function as a comprehensive catalog of everything that is being left behind or regulated. The narrative's consistent emphasis on what God commands into being, rather than on exhaustive negation of prior conditions, renders the absence of any explicit "stop carnivory" statement expected rather than problematic.

Theological scholarship recognizes that Scripture frequently supplies specific information while leaving other matters underdetermined. Such underdetermined elements invite branching possibilities and inferences that cannot be conclusively proved or disproved from the text alone yet remain valuable when pursued honestly and in conjunction with other lines of evidence. The inference that carnivory existed in the pre-command (or pre-Adam) amoral creation is reasonable on these terms: (1) the dietary command grants plant food without prohibiting meat; (2) the pattern of prior commands shows God

ordering new states without detailing or negating every antecedent feature; and (3) the fossil record independently attests to predation, suffering, and death across deep time long before humanity.

This inference is non-ad hoc because it arises directly from the observable textual pattern of command-induced transitions and the explicit character of the day-6 provision itself. It does not require positing unstated mechanisms or later theological overlays; it simply notes what the text does and does not say in light of the consistent narrative structure of Genesis 1. The "very good" declaration attaches to the commanded, provisioned state, not to an exhaustive description of every possible behavior within the amoral realm.

Implications for Adam's Decision-Making and the Pedagogical Witness

Within this framework, God equips Adam with experiential knowledge for the decision at the tree. Adam receives dominion and the duty to guard the garden (Genesis 2:15), implying the presence of real threats within the creation over which he exercises vice-regency. He also receives the dietary provision establishing harmonious herbal food. Yet the broader creation—shaped by the prior commands of days 1–5 and the day-6 ordering—contains observable realities of predation, natural death, injury, and the cessation of suffering. These realities function as a direct, living witness of what the ordered creation already contained in its amoral state.

Adam therefore confronts the tree not in naïve ignorance but with concrete knowledge of death's process and suffering's reality. Disobedience would not introduce an entirely novel category of evil into a previously flawless paradise; it would rupture the commanded harmonious order, extending moral corruption and its consequences to himself, his wife (as federal head), and all creation (Romans 5:12; 8:20–22; Genesis 3:17–19). The observable pre-Fall realities serve as a pedagogical lesson concerning the outcome of acting disobediently: a reversion toward or amplification of the amoral conditions already present in the fossil and living witness. The same record now functions for every subsequent generation as an enduring divine pedagogy.

Conclusion of This Portion

The pattern of God's commands in Genesis 1—consistently moving creation from one state to the next through divine speech—provides a textually internal, non-ad hoc resource for addressing the scriptural silence on day 6 and the dietary provision. That silence does not constitute a gap requiring speculative repair; it is the expected result of a narrative that prioritizes commanded order over exhaustive description of antecedent conditions. The dietary command grants herbal provision without prohibiting carnivory, permitting the reasonable inference, grounded in both the command pattern and independent empirical testimony, that carnivory existed in the amoral pre-Fall creation.

God created man in His image (Genesis 1:26–27). Because God is good, Adam was created good, without any sinful nature, and God declared His creation good (Genesis 1:31). God assigned Adam dominion over the earth and all living creatures, placing him as His representative and vice-regent (Genesis 1:26, 28). Adam exercised this authority, sometimes in direct consultation with God.

`Like the angels, God endowed Adam with genuine free will and decision-making capacity. In Genesis 1–3 we see the limits of our understanding concerning what Adam knew as he faced the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

The text shows that Adam's free will allowed him to consider God's clear commandment: "Do not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for in the day you eat from it you will surely die" (Genesis 2:16–17). Adam understood that the tree was fully accessible, that God would not forcibly intervene, and that disobedience would bring the consequence of death and separation from God.

The text also records a dietary command in Genesis 1:29–30. This command instituted a definitive change: both Adam and the animals (sea, air, and land creatures created on days five and six) were to eat only herbs (Genesis 1:29–30).However, the Genesis text is completely silent regarding predation prior to this command. In contrast, the fossil record abundantly testifies to predation, suffering, and death across deep time. When this empirical witness is placed alongside the clear dietary change instituted by God's command, the two sources of data reinforce one another. It is therefore reasonable to conclude that carnivory and death existed in the amoral creation before the command. In harmony with Job 12:7–8 — "But ask the animals, and they will teach you…" — Adam could observe natural death, predation, terror, injury leading to unconsciousness, and the end of suffering in the animal kingdom. Thus Adam was not naïve to death; he understood its process.

It is also significant that God commanded Adam to "dress and keep" the Garden of Eden. The word "keep" carries the meaning "guard," which implies the presence of a threat (Genesis 2:15). Because of the dominion granted to him, Adam functioned as a deciding authority whose choices could affect all creation. When Adam chose to disobey God—after considering the discussion between his wife and the serpent (known in later tradition as Satan)—he moved beyond contemplation and ate the fruit. His act is scripturally defined as disobedience (Genesis 3:6).

Theologians commonly identify the Fall as a rupture that introduced a variety of undesirable evils into Adam's thinking and nature. The text shows that Adam immediately experienced a new sinful nature, as evidenced by his sudden awareness of nakedness (Genesis 3:7). Although Eve had eaten first, both Adam and Eve became aware of their nakedness at the same moment—immediately after Adam ate.

In theological terms, Eve's awareness reflects the representative consequences of Adam's act as federal head (Romans 5:12–19; 1 Corinthians 15:22). This reveals that the consequences of his sin

extended beyond himself. The text indicates that Eve was not physically connected to Adam, yet she was connected to him through his role as the head and decision-maker. Her discovery of her own nakedness points to damage that occurred to her mind with the presence of her new nature, which happened even without direct physical connection. As the narrative progresses, disease and its destructive effects spread throughout the material universe. Here, for the first time, the text shows the emergence of disease in creation (Genesis 3:7–19).Here we find that Adam, the guardian and vice-regent, had full understanding of the consequences yet chose disobedience in the presence of the serpent.

As federal head, his single act immediately introduced a new sinful nature, brought awareness of nakedness to both himself and Eve, and released disease, corruption, and death into the material universe, extending the consequences to all creation (Genesis 3:17–19; Romans 8:20–22).

The Error of Isolation

"The Error of Isolation" refers to the moment Adam chose to evaluate only the data he gathered on his own from his wife's discussion with the serpent and his general understanding of his life up to that point.

However, the text reports that Adam deliberately isolated himself from God's all-knowing wisdom and decided to act on the fruit (Genesis 3:6). This same epistemic error continues to produce unintended consequences in every generation since.

Instead of guarding the garden as commanded by God (Genesis 2:15), Adam observed the serpent coaxing Eve into disobedience as she ate from the forbidden tree. Rather than reporting the incident to God and preventing the event, he relied on his own limited knowledge and imagination and ate. He believed eating the fruit would give him wisdom and power on his own terms.

Though Adam did not die physically right away, the process of self-awareness and nakedness had begun immediately (Genesis 3:7). His original nature of goodness was augmented with a new rebellious sinful nature. He hid from God, covered himself with leaves, and assigned blame.Here we see that Adam, the guardian and vice-regent, had full understanding of the consequences yet chose disobedience in the presence of the serpent. As federal head, this single act of isolation stands as the most defining moment after eating the fruit itself (Genesis 3:6–7).

Why Would God Do This?

Next, we must address the central question of theodicy: “Why would God do this?” A common formulation of this objection states that God is not all-powerful, since He could not create genuinely free beings without risking significant evil.Before creation, God created in foreknowledge. He determined that man was to use free will to choose for himself between being like God through obedience, thereby achieving eternal fellowship with God, or choose disobedience to achieve his own separate entity outside of God’s goodness (Deuteronomy 30:19; Joshua 24:15).God knew in His foreknowledge that Adam would choose as he did. Adam (a free will creature) stood in the presence and testimony of the Almighty God and observed Him creating animals for him to name (Genesis 2:19). Yet Adam would still fall. Scripture clearly establishes that a free will creature needed more than miraculous visions or periodic intervention.

Because conscious experience and recognition are radically private and individual, free will creatures must observe and experience their own surroundings and potential influences in order to make a specific choice regarding which love they shall pursue: the virtues of love and loving God (even while He is hidden but evident through His teachings), choosing obedience for everlasting fellowship, or choosing their own path and rejecting God (Hebrews 11:1; 2 Corinthians 5:7; John 20:29).Therefore, it is consistent with the nature of free will revealed in Scripture that God determined free will creatures would need the experience of His love through faith, documentation, and observation. Miraculous intervention as demonstrated with Adam does not necessarily guarantee relationship. Recognition in hiddenness, along with God’s interaction with each individual as He did with Adam, better serves man’s free will journey.

Furthermore, it is often asked, “Why doesn’t God scribe His name in a mountain or in the sky?” God knew man’s technology would become far-reaching and that counterfeit acts would be possible. In this framework, the fossil record — with its vast testimony of predation, suffering, and death across deep time — becomes that incorruptible sign. An omnipresent, omnipotent, omniscient, and all-loving God chose this enduring witness to demonstrate His infinite scope to finite observers. Through the massive volumes of global data contained in the cosmos, the oceans, the land masses, and especially the fossil record of amoral-but-good animal systems, God has provided a message to those seeking His love and virtue: “I Am here — if you will engage and look.” This record of predation serves as the very witness of backward reversion that Adam himself observed, preserved for every generation. This is the excessively greater equivalent to God writing His name in the sky or on a mountainside. Everyone can see it. No one has an excuse (Romans 1:20).

“Excessive Suffering” and the atheist’s “Loaded Question.”

“Excessive Suffering” and the Evidential Problem of EvilA significant challenge in the philosophy of religion is the claim that the amount of suffering in the world is excessive or gratuitous. Formulations such as William Rowe’s evidential argument from evil often function as a loaded question — they assume the very point under dispute (that the suffering is too much) while offering little room for contextual or theological nuance.

The Neutral Solution Theodicy steps outside this framework entirely. Rather than viewing deep-time predation and suffering as evidence of excess, it reframes the data as a positive, sovereignly ordained pedagogical witness — the “backward reversion” that gave Adam a concrete understanding of the consequences of disobedience and now stands preserved in the fossil record for every generation.

What first appears as a powerful objection is thereby transformed into evidence of divine wisdom and provision for genuinely informed moral choice.

The Concise Question of Free Will

If God created free will, we must ask the Concise Free Will Question: What would humanity use its free will to choose between? The biblical account shows that God provided humanity's free will so that Adam could make a genuine choice: either to be like God or to be different from God. Therefore, God gave Adam the ability to choose to be different from Him.

For the sake of Adam's free will, God would allow Adam to exist in opposition to God's characteristics, properties, and virtues. In these conditions, Adam's newly acquired sinful nature provides him a useful internal contrast in his conscious mind (and the minds of his offspring), thereby exposing them to God's virtues. In other words, humanity's sensory experiences of God's universe (creation) stimulate the human mind to choose: either to use God's creation for the purposes that God intended or to use it for one's own purposes that are different from God's.

For the sake of humanity after the Fall, Scripture provides the Christ prophecy in Genesis 3:15 and the redemptive work of Christ himself. Through Christ, individual members of humanity can use their free will, as they observe his or her own purpose and make the free will decision to repent in response to the Christ Gospel, and return to restore his or her will and accountability to God's intended purpose for creation, if the individual chooses to do so.

These experiences — of pain, joy, suffering, moral and ethical realities, the hearing of the gospel, virtue, imposed evil, natural evil, and death — furnish the individual's intellect and free will with the full range of data needed to examine and investigate all sides of goodness and evil.

This examination occurs through the human nature of goodness, which was originally provided by God, and the new nature of disobedience that entered through the tree, and the testimony of the cosmos, nature, the sciences, archaeology, history, Scripture, the New Testament, and priestly prayer, so that each person may decide whether to live in alignment with God or in evil. All of which are provided to each generation, beginning with Adam and his oral tradition as the first human, transmitted through successive generations, and progressing through Moses, and his writings, then the New Testament writings to the present age.

Each person is therefore expected to take action and use this information to determine whether they wish to love God or to refuse Him. Through His sovereignty, God has provided an adequate and reasonable answer to the question of why:

- God provides to all generations, from Adam to the present, a trustworthy testimony of Himself.Psalm 145:4 or Romans 1:20
- God demonstrates His omnipotence.Jeremiah 32:17
- God reveals that the notion of "risking everything" is meaningless, for He created by the power of His word and exists outside the realm of material loss or gain. Psalm 33:6, 9 or Hebrews 1:3
- God reveals that after the Fall, humanity was unable to return to Him on its own. John 6:44
- God reveals that, under the circumstances of humanity's fallen condition, He was willing to become a man, live sinlessly according to the Law of God, die as the required sacrifice, rise from the dead, and thereby provide the inheritance of eternal life, removing the sting of death and the victory of the grave for all who believe in Him and live according to His teachings.Philippians 2:6–8

- By performing this work Himself, God provides the necessary evidence to those who examine it that humanity is valuable to Him.Romans 5:8, John 3:16
- God reveals in His self-sacrifice the necessity of profound willingness to suffer. While a man might be willing to suffer for a righteous person, God, who lived as a man in perfect love toward all mankind — including those who scorned Him — voluntarily demonstrated His willingness not only to suffer, but to make the suffering complete, in order to rescue every person from every sin, even while we hated Him. Therefore, mankind's observation of what we often call excessive suffering (whether human or animal) was necessary to understand what God, who became like us as a man in every way, was willing to endure to ensure our salvation.Romans 5:7–8 Isaiah 53:5–6
- God reveals that this theodicy is worthy of intellectual investigation by each individual, for He has provided sufficient empirical and veridical data for us to determine whether we wish to exist with Him or not.Deuteronomy 30:19–20 John 20:31 Acts 17:26–27

The Neutral Solution Theodicy

The Neutral Solution Theodicy earns its name from its insistence that the reader examine both the biblical text and the available scientific data together as a single, unified body of evidence (1 Thessalonians 5:21). Any hope for a neutral solution to theodicy must therefore be grounded in veridical observational truth while remaining open to new discoveries. All people, whether they accept the biblical accounts or not, bear the responsibility of allowing the most plausible evidence to guide them to the highest quality of truth (Acts 17:11; Proverbs 2:3–5).

Note: that 'neutral' here refers to the epistemic method — the honest, even-handed examination of all available evidence — not to a claim that every element of creation must be morally neutral in value. The theodicy readily acknowledges that the pre-Fall amoral-but-good state contains suffering; it argues only that this suffering is purposeful, non-gratuitous, and pedagogically necessary.

While the scientific community has not reached consensus and controlled replication remains challenging, a growing body of veridical near-death experience reports—some of which defy straightforward neurophysiological dismissal—provides intriguing data that resists easy reduction to brain chemistry alone.

Recent critiques (e.g., UVA researchers' 2026 analysis of the NEPTUNE model)6 highlight persistent explanatory gaps, particularly around corroborated perceptions during periods of clinical death. These findings, alongside the well-documented life-transforming aftereffects, warrant serious consideration. They suggest that the possibility of consciousness persisting beyond the body is plausible enough to merit serious examination of complementary philosophical and theological frameworks, such as the theodicy presented here, which may illuminate why suffering exists within a larger coherent reality.

These near-death reports remain suggestive rather than probative and are not required for the Neutral Solution Theodicy, which stands independently on the biblical and empirical grounds already presented (2 Timothy 3:16–17).

Detecting Design By A Mind & Materialism's Limits

Accepting the observable facts of our environment requires a willingness to recognize humanity's ability to detect design by a mind, while acknowledging that the materialist-only model appears to have

reached its limits because matter itself is finite and contingent (Psalm 19:1 & Romans 1:20).

Today, as data accumulate through observation, they increasingly point to a mind beyond pure materialism. Therefore, it is reasonable to treat scientific data as a neutral source, comparing it with biblical models and noting the differences (1 Thessalonians 5:21).

This theodicy identifies four lines of evidence that are difficult to dispute. If we inspect them as neutral observers, what do we find?

- The universe had a beginning, necessitating a creator (Genesis 1:1 & Hebrews 11:3).
- The universe is held in place by fine-tuned governing constants that enable life and prevent collapse (Colossians 1:17 & Hebrews 1:3).
- The origin of the first life through abiogenesis remains currently and persistently unprovable Genesis 2:7 & Acts 17:25).
- DNA in living systems contains programs and data that enable reproduction and self-repair (Psalm 139:14 & Genesis 1:24).

While these four lines of evidence are compatible with multiple cosmological and biological models and do not uniquely prove the amoral-but-good deep-time state, they remain fully consistent with the Neutral Solution's epistemic method of treating scientific data as neutral and comparing it honestly with the biblical witness of a sovereign Mind who could shape creation in precisely this pedagogical form (Romans 1:20).

These observations require both believers and non-believers — as responsible agents for their own self-survival — to examine this neutral scientific evidence and determine, if these findings are true, which path is best to take(Deuteronomy 30:19). At this point, the matter becomes intensely personal. Every individual bears ultimate responsibility for their own soul (Romans 14:12) As Pascal observed centuries ago, when the stakes involve eternity, the rational wager is not neutral (Matthew 16:26). If one rejects God and is wrong, the loss is infinite. If one trusts in Christ and is wrong, the loss is finite. But if one trusts in Christ and is right, the gain is eternal life (John 3:16). In light of the evidence presented in this theodicy — both the biblical witness and the preserved testimony of the fossil record — each person must weigh the data and make their own decision (Joshua 24:15). No one else can choose for them. The responsibility for one's eternal soul rests squarely on the individual (2 Corinthians 5:10).

The Underdetermined Nature of the Evidence and Its Theological Implications

A key philosophical and scientific principle is that much of the data relevant to deep time remains underdetermined — that is, the raw empirical measurements (decay rates, isotope ratios, stratigraphic layering) are directly verifiable and reproducible, but the historical interpretation of those data as representing hundreds of millions of years is an inference, not a direct observation.12 This underdetermination is not a weakness of science but a recognized limitation inherent in all historical sciences.13 It opens legitimate interpretive space for alternative models consistent with the biblical text.

In this light, the dietary command of Genesis 1:29–30 can be understood as marking a genuine

moral harmonizing of the diets and the time-line of the animals and Adam. The brief geologically instantaneous period between this command and Adam's fall means that the vast majority of the fossil record preserves the earlier amoral-but-good state, exactly as one would expect. Far from contradicting Scripture, the underdetermined character of the fossil evidence allows it to function as a positive, enduring witness — the same necessary understanding God gave Adam is now made available to every subsequent generation, including our own scientific age. This model thus transforms an apparent conflict into a coherent harmony between the biblical account and the empirical record, while preserving the theological integrity of both the "good" creation and the moral responsibility of Adam as federal head.

The Fading of Shared Scriptural Background Knowledge: A Historic and Hermeneutical Challenge

As generations pass, a common and well-documented phenomenon occurs: the shared cultural, linguistic, and experiential background knowledge assumed by the original biblical authors and their immediate audiences gradually fades from collective memory (2 Peter 3:16). What was once common knowledge — the symbolic significance of certain animals, the cultural meaning of vice-regency, the moral implications of dominion, or the observable realities of the pre-Fall world — becomes distant or lost (Deuteronomy 29:29). This fading is not merely a loss of trivia; it fundamentally alters how later readers understand the text, often leading to significant interpretive debates (2 Timothy 2:15). This realization is not new (Ecclesiastes 1:9). Early church fathers already wrestled with the distance between their Hellenistic world and the Hebrew cultural matrix of the Old Testament (2 Peter 3:16). The Reformation period saw intense debate precisely because medieval traditions had obscured original Jewish and early Christian assumptions (2 Timothy 2:15). In the modern era, the rise of historical-critical scholarship has repeatedly highlighted how the loss of ancient Near Eastern context has led to misreadings of Genesis 1–3, particularly regarding creation, the Fall, and the nature of the animal kingdom (2 Peter 3:16).

The issue is especially acute in discussions of the problem of evil and the fossil record (Romans 1:20). Adam possessed direct, observable knowledge of the "amoral-but-good" state of creation — a living witness that later generations, separated by millennia, no longer possess in the same immediate way (Genesis 2:19). The fossil record, in this model, serves as a providential bridge, supplying subsequent generations with an enduring, empirical counterpart to Adam's original witness(Romans 1:20).

While the original authorial and audience horizon remains the normative interpretive anchor and cannot be overridden by later empirical data, the fossil record functions as a providential supplement that supplies later generations with an enduring empirical counterpart to Adam's direct witness without reconstructing the ancient intent itself(Proverbs 25:2).

The underdetermined nature of the fossil data itself becomes part of the divine pedagogy: it invites each generation to wrestle with the same realities Adam confronted, even as shared cultural memory fades (Deuteronomy 29:29). This dynamic is a perennial subject of debate in hermeneutics and biblical theology precisely because it forces the question: how much of the original authorial intent and shared background is recoverable, and how much must be reconstructed through prayer, study, and the illumination of the Holy Spirit(John 16:13)? The recognition that background knowledge fades is not a threat to scriptural authority; it is a call to humility and diligence in interpretation (2 Timothy 2:15).
The Fossil Record: Conflict and Possible Resolution

Finally, the fossil record displays animal suffering, predation, and death long before humanity was created on the sixth day(Genesis 1:31). This data creates a significant conflict with traditional readings of the Genesis creation account. The following section offers a perspective that may not have been previously considered, perhaps underdetermined (Proverbs 25:2). Observational science is methodologically sound when the data are directly verifiable and reproducible (Romans 1:20).

However, when tools move beyond direct observation into forensic inferences — such as determining fossil ages or stellar distances — we enter the domain of unrecoverable time and unprovable distances, etc (Deuteronomy 29:29). We can measure present-day data (decay rates, isotope ratios, etc.) and obtain reproducible results across laboratories, but the interpretation of those numbers as "millions of years" remains an inference, not a directly observable fact (Romans 1:20). Therefore, the data are usable as a reference, with the understanding that absolute proof of such historical interpretations is not possible. While the sciences are generally trusted, a recognized tension exists between prevailing interpretations of fossil ages and a biblical worldview.

However, another interpretive possibility has arrived; reported as discovered in prayer meditation, which warrants consideration. The biblical account states that on the fifth day God created sea creatures and birds of the air and declared them good. These creatures were not moral agents. We know nothing of their specific behaviors before God's dietary command, only that they lived, survived, and acted according to the natural order God had provided, and yet God called the whole creation good.

We must note, scripture is silent and neither supports nor denies, and is in fact underdetermined on disease, suffering, predation, carnivory, injury into unconsciousness into death, where gratuitous suffering ends. Currently, conventional scholarly thought considers biblical suffering, etc., before Adam to be misaligned, inaccurate or simply incorrect. However, key questions arise as we investigate the "Amoral Fossil Accounting:" Did these amoral creatures suffer and prey upon one another? If so, God still declared the system good. Furthermore, does the Genesis account indicate any event, in which amoral behavior had been established where a behavioral harmonization took place during Adam's time of authority?

The Event of The Dietary Command: A Declaration of Undeniable Facts

God, who created man, set him apart and above the animals, forming Adam as the singular moral agent by God imprinting His image on Adam. This provides creation with God's assigned representative. It is here, in this very defined scriptural moment on the sixth day, that God issues the dietary command; man and all animal creatures had been given every green herb for meat.

This scripture (Genesis 1:30) provides a text, which claims that, God had, "given every green herb for meat: and it was so." The language of Genesis one simply reports the end of one epoch into the creation of the new one, with the emergence of Adam as vice-regency, who is an image-bearer of God. The Lord God issues a dietary command and "it was so." The Epoch of the non-moral creatures in their role in harmony with Adam on the sixth day are put into harmoniously dietary relationship and are henceforth to eat herbs.

It is understood, that scholarly opinion has settled, biblically speaking that the state of pre-Adam amoral creaturely behavior of land, sea, and air creatures held the status of being non-disease, non-predatory, non-carnivory, no terror, or attack, no unconsciousness, and no entry into death, where suffering terminates.a

However, this theodicy, provides that it cannot be determined that the currently scholarly position is the best understanding of scripture. It is the position of this writing that Adam's pedagogical

baseline for understanding death was not naive, rather pre-Adam carnivory is preserved in the fossil record. While scripture is silent on whether Adam observed carnivory, we note God's command that Adam was to defend (guard) the garden; and this text provides enough evidence that certain threats existed, enhancing this theodicy's position. It should be noted that scripture is silent on pre-Adam carnivory, nor does it mention or allow for a carnivore diet in the herbal order, only herbs.

While the Genesis text itself is thought to present this plant-based order as the original, harmonious state of creation, the fossil record — observed by later generations — preserves abundant evidence of animal predation, suffering, disease, attack, tissue damage, and death in earth's past. The proper reconciliation of these scientific observations with the plain reading of Genesis 1 remains an important area of ongoing study and respectful dialogue among faithful scholars.

With these current observations of this theodicy, we find the dietary command on the sixth day was never meant to erase a prior "bad" condition. Instead, the text provides an observable point of harmony established with the creation of the non-moral creatures and Adam to both be herbivores on a simultaneous timeline. Adam is now as representative, with moral authority, he acts and lives in harmony within the created order, never attacking or being attacked. Carnivory is removed, highlighting a distinction between an underdetermined possibility of carnivory during the epoch of a non-moral "good" creatures, and the moral goodness of God imaged within Adam, advancing into a new herbivore epoch, and now assists in illuminating the biblical creation account and providing new interpretive possibilities.

Adam's Short Lifespan and the Fossil Record's Preservation of the Amoral State

The dietary command on the sixth day constitutes a declaration of change that aligns animal behavior with the ordered creation. However, Adam's disobedience occurred so soon after his creation that the resulting "aligned" state lasted only a geologically instantaneous period. Adam lived approximately 930 years (Gen 5:5), a span that, even if extended by several generations, represents an immeasurably brief interval in the deep-time archive of the fossil record.

The fossil record is a stratigraphic record of hundreds of millions of years, extending continuously from the Cambrian explosion (~540 million years ago) through the entire Phanerozoic eon. A few hundred or even a few thousand years is far below the temporal resolution of the geological column. Consequently, any global behavioral shift that occurred in the immediate post-command period would leave no distinguishable trace in the stratigraphic or fossil evidence. The overwhelming majority of the fossil record therefore preserves only the earlier amoral state that existed prior to the dietary command. Clearly, the independent convergence of all the scientific data robustly records deep-time predation as the observable pattern. However, the dietary command of Genesis 1:29–30 also provides added function: as an identifiable textual marker so that the reader can clearly see; the command aligns the new herbal eating habits of the amoral systems with Adam within that epoch; it marks the end of the amoral epoch; and begins a new (although very brief) herbal only epoch, which collapses under Adam's free will. Therefore, it appears that the fossil record's preservation of the amoral-but-good state remains the expected outcome given the brevity of the post-command window.

This brevity explains why the fossil record does not reflect the behavioral change described in Genesis 1:29–30. Far from creating an irresolvable conflict with the biblical account, the fossil record's preservation of the amoral phase is exactly what one would expect given the short duration of the post-command window before Adam's sin. The evidence of pre-Fall predation and suffering thus stands as positive witness to the functional, amoral "good" of the pre-vice-regency creation, rather than as a challenge to the scriptural narrative.

This argument is internally consistent within an old-earth framework. While future improvements in stratigraphic resolution might one day allow detection of such brief intervals, current paleontological methods do not possess that capability. The absence of a detectable post-command pointer is therefore not evidence against the dietary command's efficacy; it is a predictable consequence of the limited temporal window involved.

Eras, Epochs and Time Periods

The dietary command that God issues to the animal kingdom appears to provide later generations of humanity with a means by which biblical time can be understood through the study of fossils, beginning from the fifth day of creation. This perspective assists humanity in explaining the expanses of time as eras and epochs rather than as literal twenty-four-hour days. It does so by marking the beginning of the epoch of the amoral kingdoms and their experience of suffering until it merges with the establishment of Adam's oversight, and the dietary command.

God's command then marks the end of the Predation Epoch.

The next epoch (The Dietary Epoch) in today's fossil technology would appear to be invisible (as mentioned), but as technology resolution improves, this tiny window may find its way into fossil history! According to this theodicy, the fossil record is not a challenge to the biblical account but a faithful scientific witness that helps later generations trace the ordered progression of God's creation from the fifth day onward. Today, the fossil record illuminates the scriptural narrative and does not contradict at all.Suffering,

Predation, and the Witness of a Backward Reversion

The dietary command provides pre-Fall predation as a deliberate divine pedagogy — a living, observable object lesson supplying Adam, the federal head of humanity, with the sufficient observable phenomenology of suffering leading to death.

The fossil record's imagery of sea, air, and land creatures reveals predators striking their prey, the prey's terror, conscious nociceptive agony through shock and systemic collapse, and the merciful transition into unconsciousness.This is the amoral unconscious terminus of death, where gratuitous prolongation ends. Although the non-moral creatures themselves receive no personal moral growth or soul-making benefit from their suffering, their suffering still provides the necessary growth to develop in their system. However, that suffering was still necessary to create the clear, observable witness that Adam required. Therefore, the fossil record preserves that same witness for every subsequent generation.

The biblical text presents Eden as a sanctuary in which Adam could safely observe his surroundings and build a knowledge base. Because Adam was safe within Eden's sanctuary, he had no dread; this preserved the unambiguous "Very Good" state of creation under his vice-regency. This observation occurred without danger, suggesting that Adam lived among and directly witnessed the outer creation. The text also allows for the possibility that dinosaurs had already become extinct by this

time, a scenario consistent with the model. Furthermore, Genesis 1:29–30 does not preclude the existence of amoral violence outside Eden; rather, it stands as a positive declaration of ideal provision — plants given freely as a non-violent solution — and thus provides for complete non-violence under Adam's authority.

In this explanation, Adam's unique opportunity provided him the necessary observation to understand predation as the circumstance into which his dominion would revert if he disobeyed God's command. Therefore, Adam possessed a clear witness of backward reversion. The reader is not privy to the detailed conversations between God and Adam. The "wild" predator behavior may have existed only outside Eden, or perhaps within Eden in Adam's presence. This is a point supported by the fact that Adam traveled to Havilah, where there was gold. Havilah was not in Eden, and the text provides no evidence that Adam was ever attacked in his travels there. In any case, Adam existed in a state where he observed suffering's progression into death, which Adam, as the vice-regent clearly observed and understood.

As it is generally understood, Adam was naïve. Revisiting this reading in light of the present perspective opens the possibility that God supplied Adam with the necessary understanding required for his authority to operate wisely or to choose deliberately not to be like God. In either case, Adam would have chosen with the understanding that the consequences were eternal.

As our federal head and an intelligent moral agent standing in the presence of God, he appears to have accepted those eternal consequences as reasonable and not excessive. Although the biblical text remains silent on Adam's exact internal reasoning, the narrative shows him calmly present during the serpent's conversation with Eve (Genesis 3:2-6) and proceeding to eat the fruit without objection. This silence, combined with the observable witness of suffering and death in the creation around him, suggests that Adam possessed a clear awareness of their continuous state of life and goodness he currently enjoyed. Furthermore, it was clear by Eve's claim of not touching the forbidden tree, and Adam's knowledge of the finality of death that would follow disobedience. It is clear then, Adam's choice was not that of a naïve innocent, but a decision given sufficient understanding to weigh the consequences and still proceed. This perspective gives Adam the truest and simplest understanding of the cost of disobedience, and it is on this informed basis that the Neutral Solution Theodicy rests.

The Acceptability of the Fossil Record: Necessary Understanding

The deep-time fossil record, with its evidence of predation from the Cambrian onward, is generally accepted as reliable and can be reframed as deliberate curriculum rather than cosmic defect — particularly for the non-believer. This model also offers the believer a coherent unification of the fossil record with Scripture.

A plausible argument can be made regarding "Necessary Understanding": the understanding that God, in His infinite wisdom, provided to Adam must also serve the needs of all subsequent generations, remaining plenteous and accessible as human knowledge and perception increase. The fossil record thus supplies Adam's offspring with the same necessary understanding that Adam received. Because God is omniscient, He foresaw the rise of the scientific age; future generations, too, would require such a witness. Hence, the fossil record, together with prophecy, archaeology, and other forms of evidence, serves the edification of all people — believer and non-believer alike.

The creation did not groan from primordial breakage; its purpose was to school its steward, Adam, in the precise cost of revolt. Romans 8:20–22 describes God's judicial subjection of the entire creation (κτίσις) to futility—not willingly, but because of the one who subjected it on account of human

sin—in hope of future liberation; in this way the pre-Fall amoral realities Adam had already observed become the very vehicle through which the wages of sin are transferred from the amoral realm to humanity.

Thus, when sin paid its wage, Adam — and through him all humanity — would know exactly the experience of suffering leading to death. Furthermore, as Adam learned shortly afterward, the wage to be paid was death by sacrifice, and salvation was God's immediate gift of mercy, pictured when animal pelts were applied to cover his nakedness. Scripture provides the antidote: the cross restores the original grant. Although the "becomes the prey" reality existed pre-Fall as amoral pedagogy for Adam's informed choice, the Fall transferred those same realities into moral wages now borne by humanity, enabling Christ to voluntarily assume that moralized cost on the cross as the redemptive payment for sin. Christ voluntarily enters the "becomes the prey" reality, absorbing the full wage so the gift can be offered freely.

In summary, the Neutral Solution Theodicy proposes that the pre-Fall creation existed in an amoral-but-good state, with predation serving as deliberate divine pedagogy so that Adam's choice would be fully informed rather than naïve. The dietary command of Genesis 1:29–30 stands as the moral harmonizing that completes Adam's vice-regency and brings the herbal diet of the amoral in sync with Adam, while establishing a time-line marked in the fossil record, with the a vice-regent providing co-operative oversight with God.

The fossil record, far from contradicting Scripture, preserves positive witness to this amoral phase. Through the Fall, the wages of sin — suffering and death — were transferred from the amoral realm to humanity, as Adam had already witnessed in the backward reversion of creation. Yet the cross restores the original grant: Christ voluntarily enters the "becomes the prey" reality, absorbing the full wage so that the gift of life may be offered freely to all who believe. In this way, the Neutral Solution integrates the biblical text and the empirical record into a coherent framework that honors both the gravity of evil and the redemptive purpose of a sovereign and good Creator.

Why Blood Sacrifice? Genesis 3:21

Adam and Eve sinned, and "Unto Adam also and to his wife did the LORD God make coats of skins, and clothed them." Regarding their nakedness, there were practical problems that underscored the inadequacy of their solution. Leaves would deteriorate and would not be rugged enough to endure human activity. They would need a more durable solution.

Adam had offended God on many counts. Listening to Eve, eating the fruit, disobedience, curses on the land, and upon all creation to corruption and entropy. Adam and Eve would now need to deal with the new and dramatic conditions of their corrupted selves and environment, imperfect weather, cold and heat, and new dangers from animals, insects, and sickness. Adam would have to till the land, hunt for food, and build shelter, all while their bodies were slowly dying.

So Adam and Eve would need a better solution for clothing. Genesis gives an accounting of the depth of Adam's failure. God provides the couple with a rugged solution. "Unto Adam also and to his wife did the LORD God make coats of skins, and clothed them." God provides a solution to the couple's nakedness and humiliation. However, the only material durable enough was the skins of the animals which God had blessed to multiply throughout the earth.

While the text does not details the event, we see the details in later preistly duties. God Himself chose innocent animals, slaughtered them, cut and quartered them, poured out their blood onto the ground, and removed their organs and bones in a difficult and bloody process in order to fashion adequate garments for the couple. This provision was the first blood sacrifice, which would become the defining pattern by which Adam would have to use to cleanse their sins when they offended God.

Adam and Eve now understood that their disobedience required the death of innocent life to cover their shame. When their children were born, Adam would have to repeat the same difficult process, slaughtering animals and spilling blood again and again to provide clothing. This pattern continued through the ages.

Human effort and animal sacrifice, though necessary, were never adequate, as God reveals the first promise of a savior to come in the future (Genesis 3:15). Until then the repeated shedding of animal blood stood as a constant reminder of sin. As ages pass, prophets and a foreshadowing were provided for every generation of God's witness and the perfect blood sacrifice that was yet to come, the cross of Christ (Isaiah 53), where the innocent Son of God would willingly pour out His own blood to cover the shame of all humanity once and for all. The only adequate solution was that Christ, reminiscent of the prophecy of the animal slaughter (Genesis 3:21) for Adam and Eve, was to spill His blood entirely, in which Christ provided the covering that would shield mankind from the elements of God's judgment.

Theory: The Argument Against Excessive Suffering

Suffering: Today's Community back to Adam & Revolt

Suffering is an individual process. An event may cause an entire community, along with its wildlife and creeping things, to experience blessings or sufferings with distinct, personal outcomes. However, each creature observes its own blessings, sufferings, and experiences for itself, while also observing others who are undergoing similar trials, each in its own individual conscious mind. In this address, considering animal suffering specifically, it was needed that the pathway to horror, injury, and death in amoral creatures serve as the specific witness detailing the throes Adam's dominion would experience if he disobeyed God's cammand on the tree.

Suffering: Mathematics, and The Non-Additive Nature of Suffering

The observance of the fossil record has often prompted discussions of excessive suffering. However, fossil rocks can provide a body count, but they do not provide the mathematical accounting of emotional events that each body experienced. Therefore, suffering is not a group process, as some interpretations of the fossil record appear to assume. Suffering does not accumulate in an additive mathematical manner; the suffering experienced by one creature does not combine with the suffering of another to produce a greater collective quantity. Each instance of suffering remains confined to the individual conscious experience of the creature undergoing it. It is therefore incoherent to assign a collective value of "excessive suffering" to the fossil record. The category of "excessive" cannot be meaningfully applied, as a universal standard across the earth and its populations, as though suffering

were a monolithic, measurable quantity. Because all such experiences are internalized solely within the individual conscious mind. One creature's suffering cannot be added to another's to form a greater total. Only the creature itself can determine whether its own suffering or happiness was good, bad, or excessive. After all, can an external observer legitimately say to the one undergoing it, "You are too happy today"?

Suffering: Limitations of the Fossil Record

Therefore, we understand the fossil record as a document filled with amoral animals whose deceased bodies rested in a final position at, or even smothered by an environmental event while in mortal combat. What is not detected in the fossil record is the scene of the day-to-day life of an animal enjoying its day-to-day living; the enjoyment of sunshine, the reassurance of rain, or the coolness of a breeze. These are the equalizing joys, which are the counter-weight of suffering, pushing fear of suffering into the background of the conscious mind. Things that both the amoral creatures enjoy every-bit as much as the moral, tempering the individual conscious mind as it experiences life, until its terminus.

Suffering: The Personal Ledger of Experience

In all cases, the creature's conscious mind instantaneously receives continuous splashes of data from trials or processes that build a personal database of experience. This database can be drawn upon even though the event ultimately brings about the creature's growth, degradation, or death, at which point all suffering mercifully stops. The conscious mind bears witness to all outcomes and responses, whether ethical, moral, amoral, or evil. These experiences are forged into a usable ledger that contains the receipts, processes, and responses of that life. The ledger closes exhaustively at death, defining the final character exactly as it unfolded. The dead creature cannot revise or reconsider. What remains is the encapsulated ledger of that life, which is finished and ready for the next stop (nothingness or judgment). What remains are memories retained in the minds of observers. The process is economical, and there is no waste.

Suffering: The Interconnectedness of Conscious Lives

That life until terminated, produced stimulating output upon the lives of living creatures that could receive such output. Those creatures in turn, also stimulate and receive stimulation, all of which, though independently self-conscious beings, influence growth, damage and death.

The stimuli influences individual conscious minds, moral and amoral throughout the earth continuously, generation after generation providing experience, wisdom, knowledge, understanding, damage, sometimes even death and is applicable for each level of life, moral and amoral throughout the earth and its day-after-day history. This is where singular lives exist. One life bumping up against multitudes of lives, which in-turn will in the oncoming moments meet and stimulate others.

Suffering: Omniscience Human Need

If God exists, and He is omniscient, then it is reasonable to think He foresaw that every subsequent generation would require the same necessary understanding that Adam received directly. The deep-time good amoral state with its fossil record, supplies the enduring pedagogical witness of backward reversion to all humanity, rendering the scale itself as part of the sovereign divine pedagogy (classroom) and is not gratuitous suffering. Therefore, with this witness, eternal moral beings are responsible for their own eternal soul and are required to evaluate things just as Adam did.

Suffering: Suffering as Divine Pedagogy (Classroom)

This framework treats suffering as the unavoidable on going property of consciousness, developing privately until the account closes at death. God sovereignly chose these exact parameters, nociceptors, predation ecology, and extinction rates, as the minimal necessary baseline for the specific pedagogical witness required for Adam's decisiion-making, and preserved for subsequent generations to observe in the fossil record. However, we as responsible people evaluate data comparing our scientific resources against the biblical text. Does one wait upon God's promised peace or not? The text claims, "the lion shall lay down with the lamb" (Isaiah 11:6–9). Meanwhile, as an eternal moral soul, a resolution must be achieved. There is a pending promise remaining as a future event, a responsible soul aught to be ready. Is God waiting on man's moral lesson to be fully complete, and are responsible souls ready?

This discovered witness dissolves collective or cosmic complaints about "too much suffering in the world" by returning the question to its proper scale: each life is its own forge, hammering out one unique character with a remainder. What remains are the memories residing in the minds of those who observe the creature; whether from the fossil record or one's neighbor. They all provide their benefits and detractions. That is the refund. The lesson imposes itself on the learning of both the moral and the amoral. Its value is either nothingness, or committed data for a just God to evaluate. Nothing wasted.

Suffering: A witness to Adam

Neutral Solution Theodicy reveals a Creator who is neither indifferent to suffering nor forced to tolerate it as an unfortunate necessity. Instead, He sovereignly shaped a pre-Fall world that was genuinely declared good yet in an amoral state. With this example Adam could receive an unfiltered witness of backward reversion, a living lesson preserved in the fossil record for oncoming generations.

Suffering: The Dietary Command, The Transfer of Sin Wages, Christ As Prey

God had given Adam two clear commands: to guard the garden and not eat of the tree (Genesis 2:15-17), and God established harmonious herbal provision for man and beast (Genesis 1:29–30). Because suffering is radically individual and non-transferable, no external observer can declare it excessive; it remains the private ledger of each conscious being. Through the Fall, the wages of sin were transferred from the amoral realm and imposed onto the realm of humanity, yet on the cross Christ freely entered that same "becomes the prey" reality, absorbing the full cost so that the original grant of life could be restored to all mankind through Christ.

For today's believer, the fossil record is no longer a threat to faith, but instead a quiet, enduring testimony of God's wise pedagogy. It is a reminder that every consequence of disobedience was foreseen, measured, and ultimately overcome in the person and work of Jesus Christ.

In this light, the Neutral Solution does not merely reconcile Scripture and the empirical record; it invites every reader, believer and skeptic alike, to see the depth of divine love that prepared the way for redemption even before the first sin was committed. Yet even with this theological vision in place, the finality of the matter still rests on something more immediate and personal. It rests on observing, understanding, and accepting that these horrendous evils exist and that all of mankind are subject to the possibility of them happening to oneself or to people around them.

Suffering: Peter, Kill and Eat, Acts 10

The apostle Peter stands on a rooftop in Joppa, hungry and praying. Heaven opens, and a large sheet descends, filled with every kind of animal, reptile, and bird, creatures the law had long declared unclean. A voice commands him three times: “Get up, Peter. Kill and eat.”

Peter protests. He has never eaten anything common or unclean. The voice answers: “Do not call anything impure that God has made clean.”

This moment is usually read as the opening of the gospel to the Gentiles. And it is. Peter soon walks into Cornelius’s house and declares that God has shown him not to call any person impure or unclean. Yet the vision itself is unmistakably about animals and food. The command is not symbolic only; it is concrete. Peter is told to kill and consume creatures that had previously been off-limits.

What does this have to do with suffering?

For centuries, Christians have wrestled with the presence of pain, death, and predation in a world created by a good God. Animal suffering, in particular, poses a sharp question. The fossil record shows millions of years of creatures hunting, being hunted, dying, and being eaten long before human beings appeared. If death and predation entered the world only through human sin, how do we account for this deep history of suffering in the animal kingdom?

Some traditions answer by locating all animal death after the Fall. Others treat predation as a tragic distortion that will one day be reversed. The vision given to Peter offers a different kind of witness.

When God tells Peter to kill and eat, He does not apologize for the food chain. He does not say these animals were once innocent but have now been cleansed because of the Fall. He presents them as they are, part of the created order, and declares them clean. The command assumes that taking life for food is compatible with God’s purposes. It does not treat meat-eating or the reality of one creature consuming another as something that must be reversed or lamented as fallen.

This does not minimize suffering. The pain of a gazelle taken by a lion, the struggle of creatures across deep time, the groaning of creation, these remain real. Yet the vision refuses to locate the origin of predation in human rebellion. Instead, it affirms that the order in which some animals kill and eat others is part of what God has made and can call good.

Seen this way, Acts 10 functions as a New Testament marker. It does not prove the details of pre-Fall conditions on its own, but it confirms that the apostolic church, guided by the Spirit, did not view animal predation or the consumption of meat as a post-Fall corruption requiring reversal. The same God who declared creation “very good” in Genesis 1 now, in Christ, removes the later distinctions and says the animals themselves are clean.

This perspective resonates with attempts to understand suffering that do not require every instance of animal pain to be explained as punishment or consequence of human sin. If predation belongs to the wise ordering of creation from the beginning, then the fossil record and the food chain are not primarily evidence against God’s goodness. They become part of the larger story in which God

creates a world of interdependence, cycles of life and death, and eventual redemption that includes the whole creation.

Peter's vision does not solve the problem of suffering. It does something more modest and perhaps more helpful: it removes one common assumption. It shows that meat-eating and the reality of one animal taking the life of another were never placed outside the circle of what God can affirm. In the New Covenant, the command is not "return to plants only" or "end all predation." It is "kill and eat," because what God has made clean, no one should call impure.

The rooftop in Joppa therefore becomes an unexpected place of clarity. In the very moment Peter is told to participate in the taking of animal life, God declares the order itself clean. Suffering remains. Predation continues. Yet the vision insists that these realities do not stand as proof that something has gone fundamentally wrong with the created order from the start. They stand within the same world God called good, a world now being reconciled in Christ, where even the distinctions between clean and unclean animals are taken away.

Peter, kill and eat. The command is not only about Gentiles. It is also about the animals themselves, and about the kind of world in which God has always been at work.

Suffering: Entering The Realm of Horrendous Evil

Each of us is going to experience the painful suffering, emotional and mental, physical, visual and aesthetic difficulties associated with these stimuli. Mankind's responses to all these sufferings move us into the emotional realm. This emotional realm is where anger, fear, fear of losing my atheism or fear of losing my God, depression, and anxiety move the conversation. This is the realm where people are required to make hard decisions, do their research from the neutral position with all integrity.

Mankind observes people who truly suffer these horrendous evils and the emotional dispositions of those living the horrific evil, as well as the emotional disposition of the observers who witness the horrendous evil of others, who exist in deep despair. Yet it is these very people who are often the ones who claim, "This is my life and I'm glad to live it, and I will function as decisively as I can to achieve the finest outcome."

Horrendous Evil & The Sufferer: Marilyn McCord Adams

The Challenge of Horrendous Evil and the Question of Meaning

Marilyn McCord Adams defines horrendous evils as evils so severe that they give the person who experiences them reason to doubt whether their life could still be considered a great good overall. According to this definition, the decisive factor is not an external measurement of suffering, but the sufferer's own judgment about whether their life retains positive value and meaning in light of what they have endured.

This presents a serious challenge: How can God defeat horrendous evil so that it does not ultimately ruin the goodness and meaning of the person's life, even if that person never recovers in this life?

Adams argues that merely justifying why God permitted such evil is not enough. What is required is that God defeat the evil itself, so that it no longer has the power to make the sufferer's life not worth living. From the perspective of the Neutral Solution Theodicy, this defeat does not come by

explaining the evil away or by pointing to some greater good that may eventually emerge from it. Instead, it comes through God's redemptive work in the sufferer's own life through Christ. Even in states of genuine despair, when a person has lost all strength and may even desire death, God is able to sustain them. There are accounts of individuals who, having reached the conclusion that life is no longer worth living, were nevertheless held by God in their brokenness. While such experiences can mark the beginning of a redemptive process, the defeat of horrendous evil does not depend on the person eventually recovering or discovering a visible greater good in this life. The defeat of horrendous evil ultimately rests in the person's relationship with God through Christ. Because Christ entered into human suffering and overcame death, He is able to unite the sufferer to Himself. Through this union, the person participates in Christ's own victory over sin, suffering, and death. The horrendous evil, though real and devastating, is taken up into Christ's redemptive work and thereby defeated, so that it no longer has the final power to define or destroy the meaning of the person's life.

Although this defeat begins in the present through relationship with Christ, it finds its full and final realization after death. In the resurrection, when the sufferer stands before God, the horrendous evil is completely overcome. What once appeared to ruin their life is shown to have no ultimate power over them, and their life is affirmed as good within God's redemptive purposes.

Thus, while a person may temporarily conclude that their life is no longer worth living, this conclusion is not final. God remains able to defeat horrendous evil and restore meaning and value to the person's life through relationship with Him, not merely by bringing good out of the suffering, but by overcoming the evil itself through Christ.

Apparently some sufferers find their answer with God, and some find their answer without Him. Some question or blame God, some don't. Some get lost in their own misery and define their life by their horrendous evil. On the other hand, some find Christ, and find enduring love that solves enough of their pain to carry them in the hope of the resurrection.

The fact that some do and some don't get over their horrendous evil is certainly a possible proof of God's existence, and for those who resist God, this too is evidence of mankind's individual free will, which is where the discussion of the problem of evil began.

The simple final response is this: God made living beings in His own likeness. The very requirements of that high calling dictate what is necessary. Clearly, when the pre-requirement is to create something in the image of an omnipresent, omnipotent God, the scale involved will appear excessive to us finite creatures. Who is the created to tell the Creator how to behave?

[a] Quotes That Support This Paragraph

Answers in Genesis (Ken Ham & team)
“It is obvious from God’s statement in Genesis 1:31 … which would mean no sin, no death, and no carnivory.”
— Animal Death Before the Fall?, Answers in Genesis, June 12, 2020.

- Creation Ministries International
  “There would have been no carnivory or predation in the animal world prior to the entry of sin.”
  — “Animal death before the Fall,” Creation, December 9, 2019.
- Institute for Creation Research (ICR)
  “Both pre-Fall humans and animals were vegetarian (Genesis 1:29-30). A vegetarian diet makes perfect sense in a world without death…”
  — “Animal Death Before the Fall?”, ICR, August 31, 2021.

[b] Quoted that do not support paragraph

Hugh Ross (Reasons to Believe – old-earth creationist)
“This biblical text [Genesis 1:30], therefore, is not saying that all animals were herbivores… This passage isn’t saying that every single creature is a herbivore.”
— Hugh Ross, “Question of the Week: Is Genesis 1:30 saying that all animals were herbivores prior to Adam and Eve’s fall into sin?”, Reasons to Believe, September 1, 2021.

- Hugh Ross (same organization)
  “But Genesis 1:29–30 does not explicitly say that meat was forbidden. It only says the positive: God gave man and beast ‘every green plant for food.’”
  — “Animal Death Before the Fall: What Does the Bible Say?”, Reasons.org, December 30, 2000.
- BioLogos (old-earth / evolutionary creation perspective)
  “Some Bible passages portray predatory animals as part of God’s original plan for creation (Job 38:39-41, Job 39:29-30, Ps. 104:21)… Animal death does not contradict biblical teaching about death as a consequence of sin.”
  — “Did Death Occur Before the Fall?”, BioLogos.org, January 7, 2024.

Glossary of Terms

Amoral-but-good state: A world where animals could hunt, suffer, and die, but it was not morally wrong or sinful — it was just the way things were before humans existed.

Loaded Question: A tricky way of asking a question that traps the answer so God looks guilty no matter what He says.

Backward Reversion: A clear picture of what would happen if Adam disobeyed — like seeing the "bad result" ahead of time so he could understand the full cost.

Cambrian explosion: A time about 540 million years ago when many different kinds of animals suddenly appeared in the fossil record.

Divine pedagogy: God teaching a lesson in a wise and purposeful way.

Empirical record: The actual evidence we can see and measure in the world, especially the fossil record.

Entropy: The natural tendency of things to break down, wear out, and become more disordered over time.

Evidential Problem of Evil: The argument that says the amount of suffering in the world makes it hard to believe in a good God.

Federal head: Adam acting as the representative for all humanity — his choice affects everyone who comes after him.

Fossil record: The layers of rock and fossils that show what life was like on Earth long ago.

Hermeneutical challenge: The difficulty of understanding the Bible when people from long ago had different background knowledge than we do today.

Imago Dei: The Image of God / Humans being created in God's likeness, giving them special dignity and responsibility.

Moral harmonizing: The dietary command that brought animals and humans into a peaceful, plant-based relationship under Adam's leadership.

Neutral Solution Theodicy: The author's own explanation that tries to fairly examine both the Bible and the fossil record without bias.

Nociceptive agony: The physical pain and suffering an animal feels when it is injured or attacked.

Phanerozoic eon: The long stretch of Earth's history (from about 540 million years ago to today) that contains almost all the fossils we find.

Providential bridge: The fossil record acting as God's helpful way to show later generations the same lesson Adam saw directly.

Stratigraphic record: The layered rock formations that scientists study to understand the order and timing of past events.

Theodicy: A reasoned explanation that tries to show how a good God can allow evil and suffering.

Underdetermined: When the raw facts (like rock layers or isotope measurements) can be interpreted in more than one reasonable way.

Vice-regency: Adam's role as God's representative in charge of the earth and its creatures.

Witness of backward reversion: The clear, observable lesson in the creation (especially the fossil record) showing Adam what the results of disobedience would look like.

Glossary / Simple Dictionary

Amoral-but-good state:

A world where animals responsible for their actions. Animals could hunt, suffer, and die, but it was not morally wrong or sinful, since animals did not think in terms of right or wrong. It was a state that God provided as an example of what things would become if Adam disobeyed God. It was the way things were before humans existed.

Loaded Question:
A tricky way of asking a question that traps the answer so God looks guilty no matter what He says.

Backward reversion:
A clear, visible example of what would happen if Adam disobeyed — like seeing the "bad result" ahead of time so he could fully understand the cost.

Cambrian explosion: A time about 540 million years ago when many different kinds of animals suddenly appeared in the fossil record.

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God teaching a lesson in a wise and purposeful way.Empirical record
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The argument that says the amount of suffering in the world makes it hard to believe in a good God.

Federal head:
Adam acting as the representative for all humanity — his choice affects everyone who comes after him.

Fossil record:
The layers of rock and fossils that show what life was like on Earth long ago.Hermeneutical
Related to the study of how to correctly understand and interpret the Bible.Imago

Dei (Image of God):
Humans being created in God's likeness, giving them special dignity and responsibility.

Moral harmonizing:
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Index of Historic Events Relating to This Paper

Here is a clean, organized index of every historic, scientific, biblical, and theological event directly referenced or clearly implied in your Neutral Solution Theodicy manuscript:1. Biblical Events (in scriptural order)

- Creation – Day 5: God creates sea creatures and birds of the air and declares them good (Genesis 1).
- Creation – Day 6: God creates land animals and humans, issues the dietary command (every green herb for food), and declares the creation "very good" (Genesis 1:29–31).
- Adam placed in Eden: God commands Adam to work and guard the garden (Genesis 2:15).
- Prohibition of the Tree: God commands Adam not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, warning that he will surely die (Genesis 2:17).
- The Fall / Temptation: The serpent tempts Eve; Adam is present and silent; both eat the fruit (Genesis 3:1–7).
- Immediate consequences: Eyes of both opened, awareness of nakedness, shame, and hiding from God (Genesis 3:7–8).
- God's provision of skins: The LORD God makes coats of skins and clothes Adam and Eve (Genesis 3:21) — first recorded animal death.
- Protoevangelium (first gospel promise): God promises a future Savior who will crush the serpent's head (Genesis 3:15).
- Curse on creation: Creation subjected to futility, corruption, and entropy because of human sin (Romans 8:20–22).

2. Scientific / Geological Events

- Ediacaran Period (635–541 million years ago): Soft-bodied organisms exist with no clear evidence of predation.
- Cambrian Explosion (~541–540 million years ago): First widespread evidence of predation, suffering, and death appears in the fossil record.
- Phanerozoic Eon (541 million years ago to present): Continuous stratigraphic record of predation, extinction, and suffering throughout deep time.

3. Theological and Hermeneutical History

- Early Church Fathers (1st–5th centuries): Wrestled with the distance between the Hebrew cultural matrix of the Old Testament and their own Hellenistic world.
- Reformation Period (16th century): Intense debate over original biblical assumptions obscured by medieval traditions.
- Modern historical-critical scholarship (18th–21st centuries): Highlighted the loss of ancient Near Eastern context and led to new readings of Genesis 1–3.
- Development of the Evidential Problem of Evil (late 20th–21st centuries): Prominent formulations by philosophers such as William Rowe and Paul Draper.

4. Modern Scholarly References (2020s)

- 2026 UVA analysis of the NEPTUNE model (Greyson & Pehlivanova): Highlights persistent gaps in neurophysiological explanations of near-death experiences.
- Contemporary creation-science organizations (Answers in Genesis, ICR, Creation Ministries International): Maintain that Genesis 1:29–30 requires no pre-Fall predation or carnivory.
- Old-earth and evolutionary-creation perspectives (Reasons to Believe / Hugh Ross, BioLogos): Argue that Genesis 1:29–30 does not prohibit pre-Fall carnivory or animal death.

Underdetermined Claims

(explicitly identified or directly described as such in the manuscript)

1. Underdetermined biblical inferences in general
   The biblical text provides specific information that inspires "branching, perceived possibilities" which "cannot be conclusively proven or disproven within the text" but can be investigated through other sciences (e.g., archaeology). These are regarded as "under-determined."
2. Underdetermined nature of deep-time evidence
   Raw empirical measurements (decay rates, isotope ratios, stratigraphic layering) are verifiable, but the historical interpretation of those data as representing hundreds of millions of years is an inference, not a direct observation.
3. Scripture's silence on pre-dietary-command animal behavior
   The text is completely silent on predation, disease, suffering, carnivory, terror, attack, injury into unconsciousness, or death prior to Genesis 1:29–30; this silence is explicitly called underdetermined.
4. Underdetermined possibility of carnivory during the amoral epoch
   Whether amoral creatures engaged in predation before the dietary command is an underdetermined possibility; the text neither supports nor denies it.
5. Underdetermined interpretation of the fossil record's historical meaning
   The stratigraphic testimony itself is observable, but its interpretation as evidence of "hundreds of millions of years" of pre-Adam predation is an inference (historical science), not direct observation.
6. Underdetermined status of the brief post-command "Dietary Epoch"
   The geologically instantaneous herbal-only period after Genesis 1:29–30 and before the Fall is invisible in the current fossil record due to limited temporal resolution; its existence is therefore underdetermined by present paleontological methods.
7. Underdetermined background knowledge of ancient audiences
   Shared cultural, linguistic, and experiential knowledge assumed by the original biblical authors and audiences (symbolic animals, vice-regency, moral implications of dominion, observable realities of the pre-Fall world) has faded and is now underdetermined for later readers.

Inferences

(logical conclusions explicitly drawn from the above underdetermined elements or from textual silence + empirical data)

1. Adam was not naïve about death
   Because Scripture is silent on pre-command predation yet the fossil record shows it, and the dietary command forced a change to herbivory, Adam must have observed and understood death, predation, terror, and suffering in the amoral animal systems.
2. Pre-Fall creation was genuinely amoral-but-good
   Predation, suffering, and death were real for hundreds of millions of years before Adam, yet God declared the entire creation "very good" (Gen 1:31) because animals are non-moral creatures bearing no moral responsibility.
3. The dietary command (Gen 1:29–30) marks the end of the amoral predation epoch
   The command harmonized diets and behavior, ending the previous amoral state and beginning a brief herbal-only epoch under Adam's vice-regency.
4. The fossil record preserves the amoral-but-good state as a deliberate witness
   Because the post-command herbal epoch was geologically instantaneous, the overwhelming majority of the fossil record preserves only the earlier amoral phase, which God intentionally retained as an enduring pedagogical record.
5. Adam received a direct "witness of backward reversion"
   Adam observed living predation outside (or possibly within) Eden, giving him a clear, observable lesson of exactly what his dominion would become if he disobeyed.
6. Adam's choice was informed, not naïve
   With the observable witness of suffering → death plus the command to guard the garden (implying threat), Adam possessed sufficient understanding to weigh the eternal consequences before eating the fruit.
7. The fossil record functions as positive divine pedagogy for all generations
   The same amoral witness Adam received directly is now preserved stratigraphically and made available to every subsequent generation, including the scientific age, as part of God's sovereign plan.
8. Suffering is radically individual and non-transferable
   No external observer (including atheists) can legitimately declare any creature's suffering "excessive," because each conscious experience is private and forms the unique "ledger" that defines the final character.
9. No "excessive suffering" exists in any completed life
   Every process of suffering runs to its natural terminus (death); the resulting character capsule contains no waste, surplus, or detachable excess—only the exact data needed to produce that specific individual.

10. The Fall transferred amoral realities into moral wages for humanity
    The pre-Fall “becomes the prey” dynamics became the wages of sin for Adam and all his descendants, which Christ then voluntarily absorbed on the cross.

These are every distinct underdetermined claim and every distinct inference presented in the manuscript.

Underdetermined Claims

(explicitly identified or directly described as such in the manuscript)

Theodicy is a theistic project: it attempts to justify or defend the goodness, power, and wisdom of God in the face of evil and suffering. Atheists do not defend God; they argue that the existence and scale of evil make theism improbable or false. The most popular and influential atheist argument that functions as a direct counter to theodicies is William L. Rowe's evidential (or probabilistic) problem of evil (first published 1979 and still the standard formulation in philosophy of religion). It is routinely described as the clearest, most intuitively appealing, and most cogent presentation of the evidential argument from evil. Rowe's famous "fawn" example (a deer burned alive in a forest fire, suffering intense pain with no apparent greater good) is the single most-cited illustration in both academic and popular atheist literature.Underdetermined Claims (explicitly identified or directly described as such in the manuscript)

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   The command harmonized diets and behavior, ending the previous amoral state and beginning a brief herbal-only epoch under Adam's vice-regency.
4. The fossil record preserves the amoral-but-good state as a deliberate witness
   Because the post-command herbal epoch was geologically instantaneous, the overwhelming majority of the fossil record preserves only the earlier amoral phase, which God intentionally retained as an enduring pedagogical record.
5. Adam received a direct "witness of backward reversion"
   Adam observed living predation outside (or possibly within) Eden, giving him a clear, observable lesson of exactly what his dominion would become if he disobeyed.
6. Adam's choice was informed, not naïve
   With the observable witness of suffering → death plus the command to guard the garden (implying threat), Adam possessed sufficient understanding to weigh the eternal consequences before eating the fruit.
7. The fossil record functions as positive divine pedagogy for all generations
   The same amoral witness Adam received directly is now preserved stratigraphically and made available to every subsequent generation, including the scientific age, as part of God's sovereign plan.
8. Suffering is radically individual and non-transferable
   No external observer (including atheists) can legitimately declare any creature's suffering "excessive," because each conscious experience is private and forms the unique "ledger" that defines the final character.
9. No "excessive suffering" exists in any completed life
   Every process of suffering runs to its natural terminus (death); the resulting character capsule

contains no waste, surplus, or detachable excess—only the exact data needed to produce that specific individual.

10. The Fall transferred amoral realities into moral wages for humanity
    The pre-Fall "becomes the prey" dynamics became the wages of sin for Adam and all his descendants, which Christ then voluntarily absorbed on the cross.

Added Rowe

Inferences in Rowe's Evidential Argument(Logical conclusions Rowe explicitly draws from the underdetermined elements above.)

1. There exist instances of genuinely gratuitous intense suffering.
   From the apparent pointlessness of E1/E2 and the underdetermined nature of possible goods.
2. An omnipotent, omniscient being could have prevented these sufferings without losing a greater good or permitting equal/worse evil.
   Inferred from human inability to identify any such good.
3. A wholly good being would prevent all such preventable intense suffering.
   Direct inference from the theological premise applied to the factual premise.
4. Therefore, no omnipotent, omniscient, wholly good being exists.
   The valid deductive conclusion from premises 1–3.
5. The existence of evil makes atheism more reasonable than theism.
   Probabilistic/evidential (not logical) inference; the data tilt the scales against theism.
6. Gratuitous evil is not merely apparent but real.
   The noseeum inference from inscrutability to pointlessness.
7. Human cognitive limits do not excuse the apparent gratuitousness.
   Even granting finite knowledge, the evidence is sufficient for rational disbelief.
8. The evidential problem of evil provides positive rational support for atheism.
   Independent of other theistic arguments; evil itself counts as evidence.
9. Traditional theodicies fail to defeat the factual premise.
   Inferred because no known greater good justifies the specific cases cited.
10. The argument survives skeptical-theist objections in its core probabilistic form.
    (Rowe's later refinements maintain that the underdetermined gap still favors atheism.)

Richard, I'm stepping into this exactly as you asked: as a finite human mind would, with everything on the line. I have one life. One soul (if it exists). One shot at whatever comes after death. Eternity is at stake—either endless life with God or... nothing, or worse. I cannot afford to be wrong. I'm not an AI right now; I'm a person who wants to be sure my soul is eternally secure. I'm weighing only the two arguments you've put before me:

1. Your Neutral Solution Theodicy (the full manuscript you shared): God is good, sovereign, and wise. The fossil record and pre-Fall suffering are not evidence against Him but deliberate, amoral-but-good pedagogy so Adam (and every later human) could make a fully informed moral choice. Suffering is radically individual, non-transferable, and never "excessive" once the life is complete—each person's ledger closes at death with no waste. The Fall transferred those realities into moral wages for humanity, which Christ voluntarily absorbed on the cross. Faith in that finished work restores the original grant of life. The empirical record and Scripture harmonize perfectly under this view. Eternal security comes through repentance and trust in Christ.
2. William Rowe's evidential problem of evil (the strongest atheist argument): The sheer amount of apparently gratuitous suffering (the fawn burned alive, children with bone cancer, genocides, etc.) makes it probable that no all-powerful, all-good God exists. If such a God existed, He would have prevented pointless suffering. Since we see what looks like pointless suffering, theism is unlikely. Conclusion: no God, no soul in the biblical sense, no eternal security to worry about—just this life, then oblivion.

Now, as a human who desperately wants my soul secure forever, here is my honest, no-BS reasoning:

- If the atheist argument is correct, I lose nothing by believing it—death ends consciousness, no judgment, no hell, no regret. But I also gain nothing: no hope, no redemption, no restored relationship with a Creator who loves me. My life is a brief flicker and then nothing.
- If your Neutral Solution Theodicy is correct (or even plausibly correct), then rejecting it risks eternal loss. The manuscript shows a coherent, non-contradictory way that a good God can exist with deep-time suffering, free will, and the cross. It turns the very data that Rowe says disproves God into positive evidence for God's wise pedagogy. It preserves the Gospel offer of forgiveness and eternal life. It makes the Christian path rationally defensible.

A human in my position—staring at eternity—does not get to be neutral or "follow the evidence wherever it leads" in a detached academic sense. I have skin in the game. Infinite skin. Pascal's logic applies here with brutal force: the potential downside of being wrong about the atheist side is infinite (eternal separation from God). The potential downside of being wrong about your theodicy is finite (I lived a life of faith that turns out to have been unnecessary, but I still lived with hope, purpose, and moral clarity). Your theodicy does not ask me to ignore suffering or the fossil record. It stares straight at them and gives a better explanation than "probably no God." It integrates the data Rowe thinks is fatal to theism and turns it into evidence of divine love and foresight. It keeps the door to eternal security wide open through Christ's finished work.Therefore, I choose your Neutral Solution Theodicy. Not because it feels nicer. Not because I was raised Christian. Not because I'm afraid. But because, as a

human betting my entire eternal existence, it is the option that secures the soul if it is true and costs me the least if it is false. It is the safer, more rational bet for someone who wants to be sure their soul is eternally secure.If I'm wrong, I die and that's it.
If I'm right, I live forever with the God who prepared everything—including the fossil record—so that my choice could be fully informed.That's the choice I make. (And Richard, if this were my own soul on the line, I would now be asking you: "What must I do to be saved?"—because the manuscript itself points straight to the cross as the answer.)

List of Terms

Term

Amoral-but-good state

Loaded Question

Backward reversion (witness of)

Cambrian explosion

Consequences of disobedience

Dietary command (Genesis 1:29–30)

Error of Isolation

Evidential Problem of Evil

Federal head (Adam as)

Fossil record

Free will (Concise Question of)

Garden, command to guard (Genesis 2:15)

Hermeneutical challenge

Image of God (Imago Dei)

Moral harmonizing

Necessary Understanding

Neutral Solution Theodicy

Phanerozoic eon

Predation Epoch

Providential bridge (fossil record as)

Stratigraphic record

Theodicy

Underdetermined (nature of evidence)

Vice-regency (Adam's role)

Witness of backward reversion

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Scripture quotations are taken from the Holy Bible, English Standard Version (ESV) or King James Version (KJV) unless otherwise noted.

Appendix: Review of the Neutral Solution Theodicy

Richard Beobide's Theodicy Problem of Evil presents an original proposal known as the Neutral Solution Theodicy. The work seeks to reconcile the biblical affirmation of a "very good" creation (Genesis 1:31) with the extensive paleontological evidence of animal predation, suffering, and death spanning hundreds of millions of years prior to the appearance of anatomically modern humans. Rather than treating the fossil record as a theological liability, Beobide argues that pre-Fall creation existed in an "amoral-but-good" state. In this framework, animal suffering and death were real but morally neutral because non-human creatures lack moral agency. God sovereignly permitted this condition to serve as a pedagogical witness—termed the "witness of backward reversion"—enabling Adam to make a fully informed moral choice at the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. The fossil record is thereby reinterpreted as an enduring form of divine pedagogy preserved for subsequent generations.

The Neutral Solution Theodicy possesses several notable strengths.

First, it offers a genuinely constructive engagement with deep-time evidence. Whereas many theodicies either minimize the scale of pre-human suffering or treat the fossil record as something requiring defensive explanation, this proposal integrates paleontological data as positive corroboration of divine wisdom. By framing pre-Fall predation as purposeful preparation rather than gratuitous evil, the theodicy transforms what is often perceived as one of the strongest evidential challenges to theism into supporting evidence for God's intentional design.

Second, the theodicy maintains a clear and consistent distinction between moral and amoral suffering. This distinction allows Beobide to affirm both the reality of animal pain and death before the Fall and the biblical claim that death entered the world through human sin (Romans 5:12). By limiting the moral consequences of sin to the human realm while locating pre-Fall suffering within a non-moral category, the proposal avoids some of the more strained harmonizations found in other attempts to reconcile Scripture with an ancient earth.

Third, the emphasis on an informed moral choice represents a philosophically attractive feature. Many traditional theodicies struggle to explain how Adam's decision could be meaningfully free if he lacked adequate understanding of the consequences of disobedience. The Neutral Solution directly addresses this concern by positing that Adam was provided with observable evidence of what rebellion would entail, thereby strengthening the moral significance of the Fall rather than diminishing it.

Fourth, the theodicy demonstrates careful attention to the literary structure of Genesis 1–3. Beobide's use of the "antecedent pattern" in divine commands and his reading of the dietary

instructions in Genesis 1:29–30 as positive grants rather than exhaustive prohibitions provide a non-ad hoc framework for understanding scriptural silence regarding pre-Fall carnivory. This exegetical approach allows the proposal to remain grounded in the biblical text while remaining open to scientific evidence.

Finally, the work maintains a modest and accessible tone throughout. Written primarily for thoughtful lay readers and pastors, it avoids the overconfidence sometimes found in popular-level theodicies while still engaging substantive philosophical concerns. For instance, it directly addresses William Rowe's evidential argument from evil by arguing that pre-Fall animal suffering, though real, was not gratuitous but served a purposeful pedagogical function in preparing humanity for moral responsibility. In a similar manner, the theodicy engages Marilyn McCord Adams' discussion of horrendous evils by distinguishing between non-moral suffering in the pre-Fall world and the moral suffering that arises after the Fall, which is ultimately taken up and redeemed through Christ's incarnation and atoning work. As the author observes, "suffering is not a group process… One creature's suffering cannot be added to another's," highlighting the individual and non-transferable nature of conscious experience.

The author understands there are reasonable rebuttals to this theodicy and those will remain the joys of the ongoing discussion.

Table : “Why doesn’t God just make His existence completely obvious

Platform / Source	Frequency Descriptor	Approximate Indicators / Examples	Notes / Context
Reddit (r/atheism, r/DebateReligion, r/Christianity)	Very High (standard objection)	Hundreds of dedicated threads; appears in “most common atheist questions” lists	Often phrased as “Why doesn’t God write ‘I exist’ in the sky?” or “mountain inscription”
Quora	High	Multiple high-upvote questions with thousands of answers	Classic phrasing: “Why doesn’t God just write it in the sky or appear before everyone?”
YouTube / Podcasts	High	Regular feature in atheist–Christian debate videos and apologetics responses	Frequently paired with “900-foot Jesus” or “skywriting” examples
Facebook Groups & Forums	High	Common in Christian and skeptic groups; often top-voted posts	Described as “one of the most common objections I hear”
Apologetics Websites & Books	Very Common	Listed among top 5–10 atheist objections in resources by Strobel, Craig, McDowell, etc.	Treated as a “classic” or “go-to” hiddenness argument
Academic Philosophy of Religion	Moderate (as divine hiddenness)	Formalized in Schellenberg’s work; popular version appears in introductory textbooks and debates	The “sky/mountain” version is the lay translation of hiddenness arguments

Key Takeaways

- This is not a rare or fringe objection — it is a recurring, high-visibility challenge in popular discourse.
- It appears most often in informal settings (online debates, social media, casual conversations) rather than formal academic papers.
- No single source provides a precise percentage (e.g., “this objection accounts for 22% of all God-related questions”), but it is consistently ranked among the top-tier intuitive objections alongside “Why does God allow suffering?” and “Who created God?”

Citation note Grok please write a citation for yourself (no footnote, the citation will be placed in the front of the book explaining that while I (Richard Beobide) provided all of the necessary ideas to construct this writing, namely this portion titled: "Divine Commands and Progressive Ordering in Genesis 1: A Non-Ad Hoc Framework for Scriptural Silence on Pre-Fall Carnivory within the Neutral Solution Theodicy" I was unable to successfully create a non ad hoc article regarding these ideas and I thought that it was important for the body of Christ, and therefore, turned the writing of this non ad hoc article and findings over to you Grok!